

# *Sketch*

---

*Volume 14, Number 1*

1947

*Article 11*

---

## Sculptor

Christian Petersen\*

\*Iowa State College

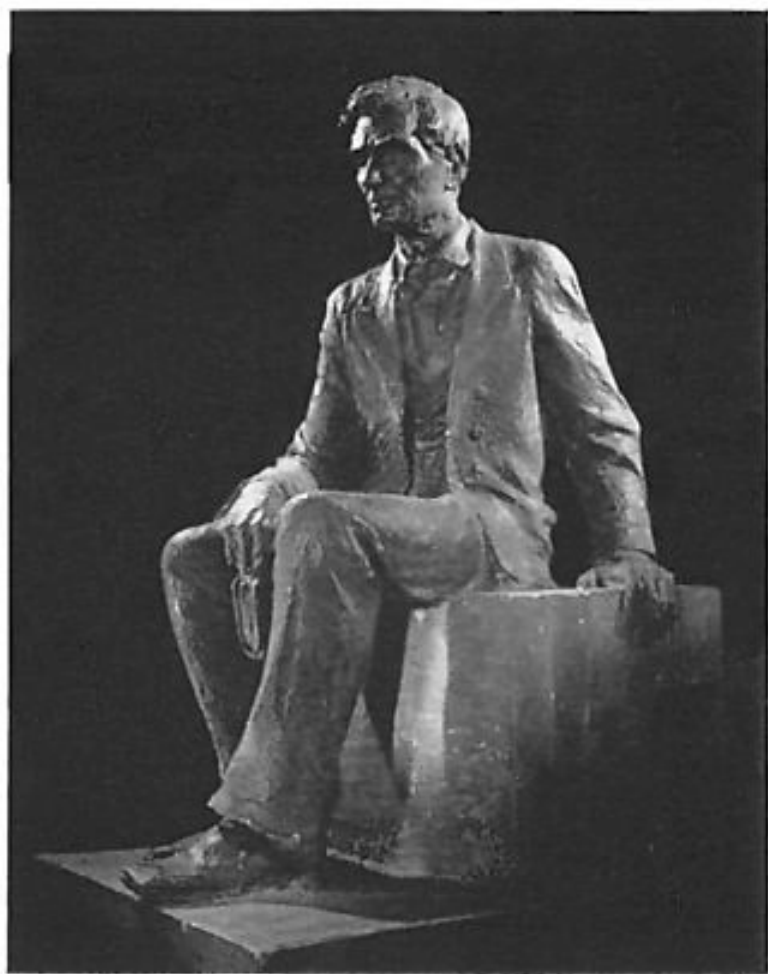
Copyright ©1947 by the authors. *Sketch* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).  
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch>

# Sculptor

Christian Petersen

## **Abstract**

THROUGH his work as artist in residence at Iowa State College, Christian Petersen has, with candor and simplicity, created a permanent monument to the beauty and vitality of the American Mid-West...



*Portrait - Pencil*

## Christian Petersen: Sculptor

**T**HROUGH his work as artist in residence at Iowa State College, Christian Petersen has, with candor and simplicity, created a permanent monument to the beauty and vitality of the American Mid-West. His work has been recognized throughout the world, and today it can be found in such places as the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the New England Conservatory of Music, the Reinhardt Galleries in New York City, and the Iowa Historical Museum.

In the seated figure of Lincoln, Mr. Petersen conveys more than the greatness of the man. He reveals the essential humility and simple honesty which made that greatness loved by the people. Most of his work has centered about his own environment; his models range from the neighbor's children to the victims of national tragedies. Thus, the children of Dr. and Mrs. A. I. Haugen, of Ames, are shown below in the statue which has been called a "bar of music in sculpture." And, in "Flood," shown on the next page, he reveals the plight of humanity when faced by one of Old Man River's destructive rampages.

With feeling and understanding, Christian Petersen documents the life about him. Today he can be found in his studio in the Veterinary Quadrangle molding with clay or chiseling from stone the lasting poetry of everyday people's lives. The gentleness of spirit which seems to permeate all of his work is easy to see in the mein of the artist himself, in the soft, clear voice in which he speaks, in his gentle affection for children.



*"A bar of music in sculpture"*

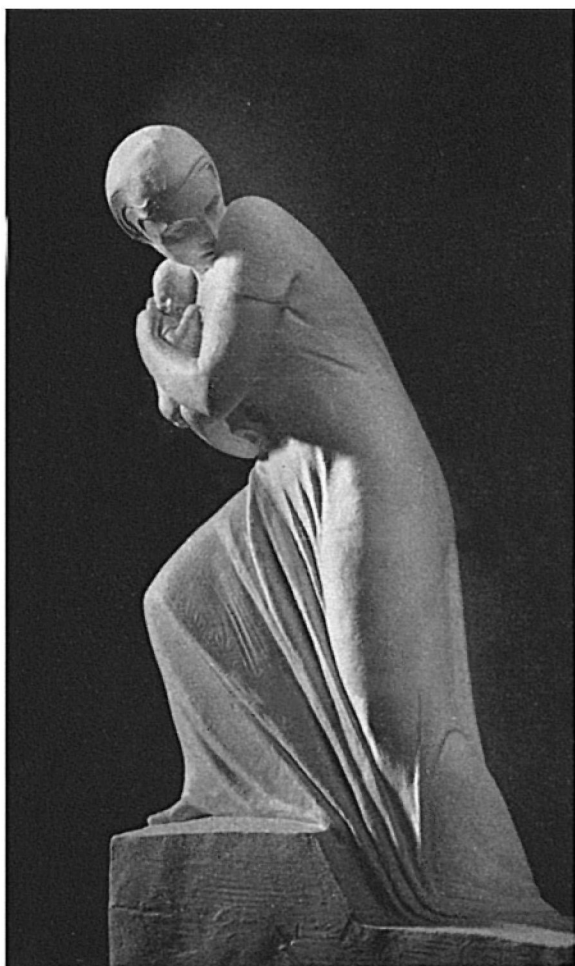
Not a little of the fame for Iowa State's beautiful campus goes to Christian Petersen. His works are seen everyday by thousands: the cupids at play at the fountain by the Home Economics building, his animal figures in the courts of Dairy Industry and the Vet Quad, and the Indian women seated at the fountain in front of the Memorial Union, to mention a few. The happiness and serenity of a primitive life-cycle is depicted in the Indian group. Carved in stone, these figures express tenderness, reverence, toil, and reward. Three of the women work the earth and plant and reap the food that maintains life. The fourth nestles her newborn child to her bosom.

Born in Denmark, of farm folk, Christian Petersen was brought to America at the age of nine by his parents who found the Prussian domination intolerable. The immigrant boy learned the engraver's trade, and learned it well. He graduated from his class with honors and soon rose to the top of his craft. Sculpture was at first a diversion, studied at night. Finally he decided to give up the security of his trade for an uncertain career of creative art. He worked first in Boston, but, in 1934, he found a less inhibited environment in the middle-west at Iowa State.

In a few months, a series of figures tracing the lives of college students will mark the entrances to Iowa State College. A wall is to be built along Wallace Road as it swings away from Lincoln Way toward the women's dormitory area. Along the wall, life-size figures of men and women, studying, thinking, relaxing, working, will be seen. No one who sees them can fail to appreciate their significance, for in depicting the American college student, Christian Petersen knows no peer.



*sculpture."*



*Flood*